

Teacher Conservation Institute: Urban Connections

This June, the City of Austin partnered with Texas A&M Forest Service and Texas Forestry Association to offer Teacher Conservation Institute: Urban Connections. The three-day training was adapted from a five-day residential training offered in East Texas for over 25 years. The program sought to support educators in integrating nature-based learning throughout their programs and to deepen urban forest stewardship across our communities. Austin-area educators immersed themselves in the world of urban forestry and discovered how urban forests are integral to the well-being of our communities. Through field trips, presentations, and hands-on learning, participants discovered the value of urban forests and ways to use the environment as a teaching tool.

Twenty-five educators participated in the inaugural program representing regional school districts, non-profits, and state and city government. Participants gained confidence in teaching environmental concepts, strengthened their knowledge of the importance of trees in our communities, and deepened their understanding of the lasting impacts of inequitable access to nature. Each attendee walked away certified in the multi-disciplinary Project Learning Tree PreK-8 curriculum. The program was well-received and several attendees are already applying Project Learning Tree lessons into their work. As one participant wrote in their closing evaluation, *"This was an outstanding training that I will recommend to fellow educators. I love getting students outside and you have provided amazing ideas, lessons, and experiences to help me with this! Thank you so very much!"*

TFS and St. Edward's are hosting a facilitator workshop at Wild Basin for Oct 12 + 13 for those interested in facilitating PLT workshops.

The Urban Forestry Program is hosting PLT workshops this fall to train PARD staff that work in recreation centers + park rangers.



